

## Judaism in a suitcase visits Banff

*Banff Crag and Canyon*

By Larissa Barlow



They call it Judaism in a suitcase. And it's a good description when Rabbi Yossi Matusof opens up his bag and starts to pull out all the items he and fellow Rabbi Chaim Itkin are hauling with them all over Alberta.

From Shabbat candles to kosher food, the two young rabbis are on a mission to meet as many Jewish people as possible.

The Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta, for the fourth year in a row, has sent two young rabbis on a tour of Alberta to seek out Jews in rural areas, and Matusof, from Calgary, and Itkin, from Pittsburgh, made a stop in the Bow Valley, introducing themselves to locals and visitors alike.



"It's growing every year. People really enjoy it," said Matusof. "I think people enjoy it more when they're travelling because they're on one big adventure and you're more open to new things.

"But it's nice for the locals because you don't have this opportunity very often."

Two years ago, Matusof was in Banff with Roving Rabbis and met a family of five from Chicago visiting the area. The three boys and dad had never had a Bar Mitzvah, the Jewish coming of age ceremony, and Matusof helped them have one right on Banff Ave.

"We had four Bar Mitzvah's right on the street," he said. "Their mother loved it."

And it's quite the experience for the two young rabbis as well. Both 23, they've recently finished lengthy rabbinic studies and are enjoying getting out and meeting people around the province.

"Every time we meet someone, we do something different," Matusof said, noting they might provide kosher food or simply some brochures.

"You come to teach a bit, but you end up learning a lot too."

They're now off to other parts of the province, but Matusof said they might be retuning to Banff at the end of their journey. He said they would also hold a Shabbat meal in town if there were enough interest.

"It's something we'd love to do. It would be great for the tourists and the locals."

Roving Rabbis is a worldwide outreach program that has been held for years in rural areas. This year, 500 young rabbis and senior rabbinical students are visiting more than 11,000 cities.

For more information, visit [rovingrabbis.com](http://rovingrabbis.com) or contact Matusof and Itkin directly at 587-228-0741 or [rovingrabbis@chabadalberta.org](mailto:rovingrabbis@chabadalberta.org).